

## CHAPTER XI

### HISTORY

#### ABORIGINES AND EARLY EXPLORATIONS

The earliest inhabitants. This part of the chapter will sketch the aboriginal history of the first residents of Utah, people who occupied the state for approximately 250 times as long as the white man has and who were here when the latter first came.

Anthropologists agree that some twenty thousand years ago when the last ice cap covered much of North America, immigrants were crossing Bering Strait to enter a continent never before seen by human beings. They were a "mongoloid" people who were first cousins to the Asiatics and ancestors of the modern Indians. At this time Lake Bonneville existed in the place of Great Salt Lake, when camels, sloths, mastadons, and other now extinct species roamed the country. Anthropologists are also agreed that until the Norsemen settled Greenland and the Europeans colonized America after Columbus' voyages, no white man ever set foot in the New World. Slowly the first Americans pushed southward, and eventually they populated the entire New World from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego.

The earliest Indians left scant remains. "Gypsum Cave," near Las Vegas, Nevada, has yielded dart shafts and points, chipped flint knives, and a few other artifacts twelve to fifteen thousands years old. Near Folsom, New Mexico, expertly chipped flint dart points were found with the remains of thirty slaughtered bison of an extinct species. A "Folsom" point has been found in Colorado near the Utah border. Undoubtedly, the "Gypsum Cave" and "Folsom" people also inhabited Utah. They were very primitive and the difficulties of procuring food restricted their numbers to small bands. They gathered wild seeds, berries, and roots, and hunted game by means of a short spear hurled with the aid of an atlatl or throwing stick, a device about two feet long which served to lengthen the throwing arm. (The bow was not yet known.) Social life was built around the family unit. Religion was restricted to the wielding of occult powers by the medicine man.

When Lake Bonneville began to subside, Indians in a similar stage of culture moved into caves left along the high lake shores, such remains having been found on Promontory Point and on the southern shore near the Old Black Rock resort. For nearly twenty thousand years, the Indian customs changed but little. But about 3,000 B. C. a new food that was to have a profound effect upon the Indians of Utah was discovered by the tribes in Central America. A wild grass, now called teocintli, was domesticated or brought under cultivation and eventually developed into maize, or as we call it, corn. Beans and squash were quickly added. This triumvirate of plants gradually spread or "diffused" from tribe to tribe (there was little actual migration) and had revolutionary effects upon those who adopted it.

The Basket Makers. About 2,000 B. C. the Indians occupying the valley of the San Juan River, much of which is in San Juan County, Utah, began to abandon their nomadic, hunting life for farming. Their remains are found today in many caves, one of the finest being Cave Lakes Canyon,

near Kanab, Utah. Their expertness in making basket has merited them the name Basket Maker, although the chief significance of this term lies in their failure to make pottery which was very characteristic of later peoples.

The Basket Makers were not intensive horticulturalists but spent much time on the chase. During a brief season they grew maize, then stored their harvest in caves and, armed with atlatls, took to the hunt. Slab-lined cists or bins about six feet in diameter and several feet deep were used both as storage pits and as graves. Among the mortuary offerings in the graves are excellent specimens of Basket Maker implements, including atlatls, darts, large, firm basketry bowls and trays, beautifully decorated cloth woven of Indian hemp, yucca and cedar bark, skillfully made sandals, and tiny dolls or figurines of clay. The body of the deceased was flexed and wrapped in blankets woven of strips of furs. Often entire bodies have been preserved, flesh and hair having endured from three to four thousand years. These are, however, natural "mummies," which simply desiccated in the dry climate but were not embalmed in any manner. The Basket Makers were a long headed people who stood about five feet four inches tall.

Toward the end of their occupation of the San Juan Valley, the Basket Makers became more settled. They enlarged their storage cists to 15 or 20 feet in diameter, roofed them over with a cone of poles covered with adobe, and developed them into houses. This bespeaks a greater dependence upon horticulture. Beans, moreover, were added to their menu. Some think that pottery in the Southwest was invented at this time, for bits of unbaked mud, which bear impressions of baskets, have been unearthed in Basket Maker sites. It is thought that baskets were first coated with clay, then accidentally burned, which showed that the clay would stand alone, and that finally vessels of baked clay, true pottery, were developed. Others believe that the knowledge of making pottery, like maize-growing, diffused from Central America where it was known two thousands years earlier. There is, at present, no positive proof of either view. But we do know that true, although crude, pottery was made by the Basket Makers toward the end of their period.

A common Basket Maker custom was to decorate the cave walls with pictographs (painted) and petroglyphs (chipped or carved pictures). This has been the habit of many tribes of Indians. All are popularly lumped together under the term "hieroglyphs." To call them this, however, is a mistake, for hieroglyph implies writing, which none of these were. Some were pictorial records, some magical signs and medicine men's marks, some deities and guardian spirits, and many were symbols, the meanings of which we shall never know. No symbols were of the alphabet nor even of the more primitive forms of writing, known to the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, Aztecs or Mayas.

**The Pueblo Indians.** At or a little before the time of Christ a new Indian group came into the Southwest. We call them Pueblo (Spanish for "village") because they soon learned to build small villages of masonry houses. They were a little shorter than the Basket Makers and had round heads which were flattened occipitally by pressure of the cradle board during infancy. Their mixing with the Basket Makers seems to have been peaceable, for their early cemeteries contain Pueblo and Basket Maker skeletons in equal numbers. Eventually, however, the latter disappeared very likely having been absorbed into the greater number of Pueblo people. The origin of the Pueblo

Indians is not yet known. They were comparatively primitive and simply adopted Basket Maker customs, adding very little that was novel.

By this time, however, squash had "diffused" from Central America enlarging the food list and binding the people more closely to the soil. Native American cotton also came to them from the same source, stimulating advances in weaving. The bow and arrow which now replaced the atlatl may have been introduced by the Pueblo Indians.

On the whole, however, Pueblo development continued from the point where the Basket Maker had left off. Village sites were chosen with reference to arable land. Houses were built on mesas in valleys and often in caves over the debris of the older Basket Maker storage cists and "pit-lodges." Horticulture became the major occupation and often extensive irrigation works were under-

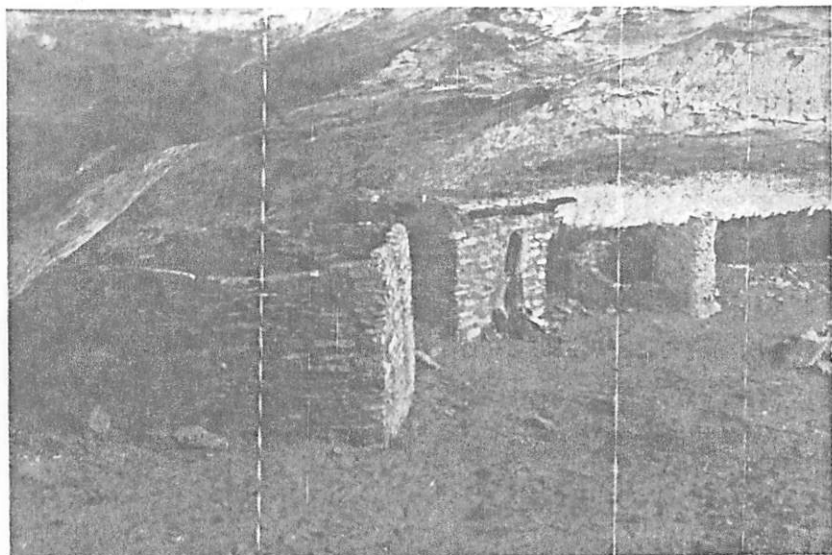
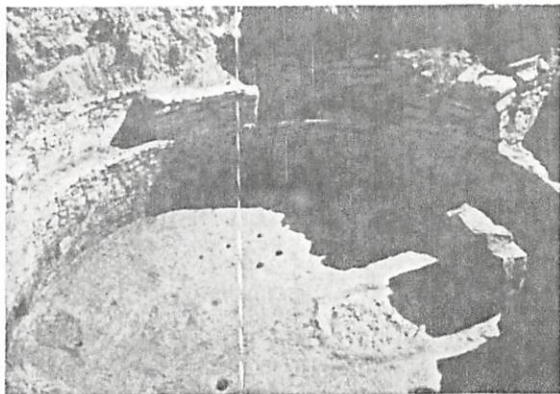


FIGURE 55—Pueblo cliff houses, Cottonwood Canyon, near Kanab.

taken. Soil was tilled with "digging sticks" about three feet long with widened ends which were often tipped with mountain sheep horn. Even their basic religious concepts sprang from their farming. They prayed and danced for rain and crop fertility, made offerings to the gods of earth and sky, and had a ceremonial calendar based on observations of the celestial bodies so that planting and harvest rituals might come at the proper times.

Architecture was conspicuously improved. Instead of merely roofing a circular hole with a cone of poles, they made the pits more square and shallow and the walls more vertical. Within another few hundred years, roughly between 300 and 800 A. D., they replaced the wattle-and-mud walls with horizontally laid sandstone blocks, eliminated entirely the sunken floor, roofed the dwellings with horizontal poles and adobe, grouped their rooms in clusters of from two to thirty, and thus created the Pueblo style of architecture which is used to this day among their descendants in Arizona and New Mexico and is copied by many white men. The original Basket Maker circular pit-lodge,

however, lingered on as the ceremonial room or "kiva," one or more of which is found at every Pueblo village. Like its prototype, the kiva is circular and underground, but the pit is lined with masonry. It usually has certain characteristic features: a ventilating shaft which runs out from the floor and turns vertically to the ground surface; a small partition or air "deflector" between it and the central fire place; a small hole in the floor near the fire place, the "sipapu" or entrance to the underworld where many gods dwell; a smoke hole in the center of the roof which also served as door. Kivas were used for ceremonial dancing and other ritualistic observances and as a men's club house and bachelors' dormitory.



*Courtesy University of Utah.*

FIGURE 56—Kiva or underground, ceremonial room near Blanding, San Juan County. On the extreme right is the ventilator opening in front of which stands the "deflector." Next to that is the circular fire place. The small hole on the left of the fire place, opposite the "deflector" is the sipapu. The small holes in the floor on the far side are probably where a loom stood.

on-red" and a small amount of "black-and-white-on-red" ware is known from southern Utah. Utah Indians never made "glazed" pottery, that is, the surface of the vessels was never vitrified or partially turned into a glassy finish. Other pottery ware included large "corrugated" ollas built up of thin coils of clay which were allowed to remain for their decorative effect, giving the olla a "corrugated" exterior.

The people of different periods and localities followed their tribal conventions of form, technique, and ornamentation so slavishly that it is possible for an expert to tell from a small, broken pottery sherd the time and place at which it was made. In fact, the history of the Indians of our Southwest has become known largely through a minute study and comparison of pottery types.

The manufacture of other objects also had a florescence. The Pueblo Indians made ornaments including beads, ear pendants, and necklace pendants, many of which were skilfully made and some exquisitely carved of stone, shell, turquoise, and bone. They wove robes out of long cords around which feathers had been twisted, and made a variety of sandals and other articles of apparel. They kept the domestic turkey for its feathers but did not eat it. They

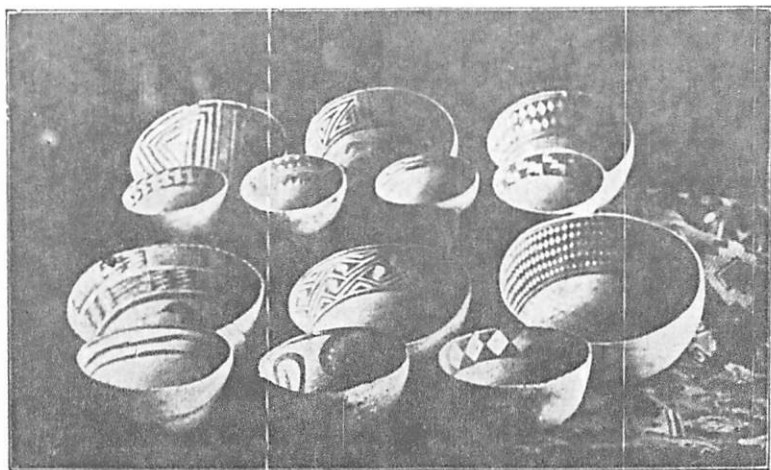
Arts and industries kept pace with architecture, achievements in ceramics being particularly fine. Bowls, ladles, pitchers, mugs, "seed jars," and occasionally duck effigy jars were expertly made and decorated with black geometric designs on a white background. After a pot had been constructed and the clay dried, a thin wash of white clay was applied and allowed to dry, then the black design was painted on. The pot was then baked in an open fire, the decoration being burned on. This is called "black-on white" ware. "Black-



ground corn on neatly squared stone slabs, "metates," by means of rubbing stones, "mullers," or "manos."

The Pueblo growth sketched above centered in San Juan County but it affected neighboring Indians. By 800 A.D. there were thousands of tiny Pueblo villages throughout the southern part of the state, having a population many times greater than that of the present Caucasians in the same region. This was possible, not because the climate and soils were then different, but because the Indians farmed only for themselves, not for an outside market. Their villages were everywhere. Those who happened to build in caves have popularly been called "Cliff Dwellers" but they were not a distinctive group.

While the Basket Maker and Pueblo Indians were forging ahead in southern Utah, the remainder of our aboriginies rather lagged. The Basket Maker culture



*Courtesy University of Utah.*

FIGURE 37—Pueblo bowls, San Juan County.

diffused so slowly that by the time it reached the northern part of the state many Pueblo features had overtaken it. Around Great Salt Lake and in the Uintah Basin are mounds—these have no relation to the great earthworks of the Mound Builders of the Mississippi Valley—which are collapsed and disintegrated remains of pit-lodges of the primitive Pueblo type. These were often destroyed by fire which burned the roof adobe into brick, giving rise to the popular mistake that the sites were pottery ovens. The pit-lodge pottery is in some ways distinctive but many of the black-on-white bowls closely resemble those of San Juan County. Clay figurines which the Pueblo people of San Juan County ceased to make occur in great abundance in western Utah. Usually they are miniature models of females, of unbaked clay two to five inches long, often ornamented with stuck-on pellets of clay representing beads, earrings, hair, etc., and painted over with red. Their purpose is unknown. Meanwhile, in eastern Utah, the Basket Maker custom of drawing pictorial representations of their gods on the cliffs culminated in portrayals of unprecedented merit. The finest petroglyphs in the United States occur near Vernal in the Uintah Basin. Other excellent groups painted in shades of red, white, yellow, brown, and even

purple and green, may be seen in Barrier Canyon below Green River, around Torrey, and at many other sites including some as far south as Moab.

Later Pueblo architecture also spread northward. In the eastern part of the state we find houses and small granaries (the latter have given rise to the myth of "pygmy" cliff dwellers) built of sandstone slabs, but often associated with Basket Maker style slab-lined storage cists. A few stone houses occur even in the Uintah Basin, while they are common in Nine Mile and Hill Creek canyons to the south. The lack of suitable building stone in western Utah brought about a substitution of adobe. Mounds excavated at Provo, Nephi, Kanosh, Beaver, Parowan, and Paragonah contain the remains of clusters of rectangular rooms having thick adobe walls. One such room was excavated even at Willard.

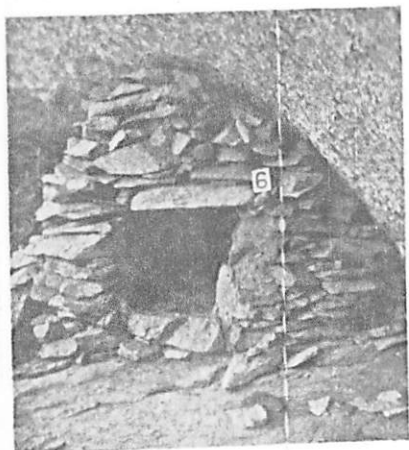


FIGURE 58—Pueblo granary and cave on the Colorado River near the mouth of the Fremont River.

ture which is still used today. Pottery, art, industries in general, religion, and social life achieved a new excellence. This is called the "Great Period" of the Pueblo and from it date the finest ruins in Mesa Verde National Park. By 1,200 or 1,300 A. D., however, the Pueblos were driven on southward and today their few descendants linger on in about 20 villages in Arizona and New Mexico, in Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, Taos, and others.

After the disappearance of the Pueblo Indians, the Shoshonean tribes took possession of Utah. These were: the Ute in the eastern half and center of the state, Paiute in the southwest, Goshute just south of Great Salt Lake, and a few Shoshoni in the northwest. There are also a few Navajo in San Juan County. The modern tribes are interesting because they are so primitive, for they have changed relatively little in many centuries. They hunted all kinds of wild game with the bow and arrow but were not adverse to eating gophers, ants, and grasshoppers. Every edible seed and root was used as food but they grew no crops. Some tribes lived in crude, dome-shaped willow "wickiups," whereas others merely crouched behind willow wind-breaks when the weather was severe. Clothing was limited to a breech-cloth for men, sometimes grass skirts for women, occasionally mocassins, and, for cold weather, a blanket

About 800 A. D. this incipient civilization in Utah was suddenly destroyed. The cause was probably not climatic change, pestilence, nor any other natural agency, but human enemies. The Navajo and Apache moving down from Canada, exterminated or drove out the peaceful inhabitants of the thousands of tiny hamlets. Indeed, the latest Pueblo sites were obviously selected with a view to protection. By 1,000 A. D., the greater part of the state was again given over to a primitive hunting and gathering people, the Shoshonean tribes, while the Pueblo Indians made their last stand in San Juan County, Utah, and adjoining parts of Arizona and New Mexico. But the tragedy was stimulating. Crowding into caves for protection, the Pueblos developed many-storied archi-

woven of strips of rabbit fur. Although basketry was their chief manufacture, it was of a poor grade. None made pottery except a few in the southern part of the state, where by contact with the Pueblo tribes they learned to make crude vessels and even to grow a little corn.

The Shoshonean tribes lived a difficult life, close to nature like the earliest Americans. They were grouped into small bands which lacked leaders except on those few occasions, such as communal hunts, when leadership was required. Religion centered in the medicine man, who through his contact with supernatural "powers," cured, prognosticated, and performed other miraculous feats. Lucky individuals also had their own protecting "powers" or guardian spirits.

Recent contacts have introduced certain Great Plains Indian customs into the eastern part of the state. Some of these are: the use of tipis, parfleches, moccasins, and other buck-skin articles, and the Sun Dance.

Most of the impoverished native culture possessed by the Shoshonean tribes has been replaced by the white man's civilization. There lingers, however, faith in the medicine man and an inveterate love of gambling, things which are characteristic of practically all American Indians.

A synoptic exhibit of the above Indian history may be seen in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Utah. Many fine Basket Maker and Pueblo specimens are also on display at the Deseret Museum and the State Capitol.

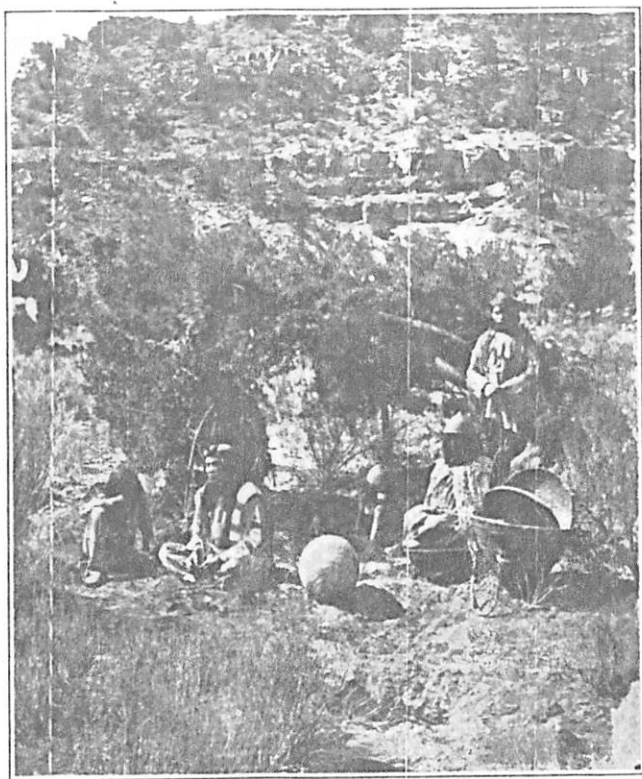


FIGURE 59—Shoshone Indian Camp.

*Courtesy J. Cecil Alter.*